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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, depending on where you are at this moment, you could be in the midst of one of two current hurricanes somewhere along the [U.S.] east coast. Two hurricanes, each within a day of each other, is a rare event. Hopefully, by the time they get to New England, they'll just be a couple of batches of strong thunderstorms, or less. We're told that this Saturday should actually be a nice day, sandwiched between the two storms.

There's not much going on this week, otherwise. The week has mysteriously passed by quickly; and I haven't even had much time to consider a topic for discussion, much less write about it. So, to give you all a break, or disappointment, I'll move right along into this week's issue.

Until next time...

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WinDom Mailing List Has Moved

The WinDom mailing, formerly hosted by Free (a french ISP), is now hosted by sourceforge (as CVS depository). The old mailing list will be destroyed on september. Details on WinDom web page.

<http://windom.sf.net/>

Hatari, version 0.50

Version 0.50 of the Atari ST emulator Hatari for Linux and other systems has been released.

Release notes for this version:

- A lot of internal code cleanup and bug fixes.

- Added a dialog for creating new blank floppy disk images.
- The source code has been optimized for better emulation speed.
- Hatari now supports RS232 emulation.
- Some bugs in the 68000 emulation have been fixed.
- The emulator now checks for double bus errors and stops the emulation if necessary (instead of crashing the emulator).
- Timer-D is now patched correctly again.
- The old font has been replaced by two new fonts so that the GUI now looks better in high resolutions.
- The fonts are now linked into the executable.
- Added support for DIM floppy disk images.

<http://hatari.sourceforge.net/>

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I'm going to tell you right at the outset that this is going to be a column without UseNet posts. There are just too few to do a good column this week. I'll use this week's along with posts from next week in my next column.

Of course, as with most things, that's only part of the story. The herniated disc in my neck is still giving me a lot of trouble, and typing is sort of hit-and-miss.

It's that "part of the story" thing that has me thinking about the world in general.... or at least the world of politics in general.

Yep, you've guessed it. I'm going to hammer at you some more about voting. I find it interesting that several groups have just recently started pushing the idea of voter registration and the importance of voting.

Groups like Rock the Vote and a few others that I can't recall at the moment have started saying what I've been hammering at you for a couple of months now. Well, I don't have to pay for air-time to get my message across, so I guess I've got the upper hand there. The important thing is that groups like that continue to remind you that voting is important.

I've purposely kept from mentioning my leanings because it's not my

intent to sway you. Hell, if you already have an opinion, I doubt I could sway you anyway. But participation is the more important part. It's kind of like the Academy Awards where the losers always say that being nominated is the real honor.

Whether you vote one way or the other is much less important than the act of voting itself. It's voting itself that's the honor... and the responsibility... not whether you're on the 'winning' side or not. Because whether the guy you voted for wins or not, we all win because the system works the way its supposed to work. Just look at the last Presidential election. A few votes one way or the other and it would have been another fairly hum-drum election. This is another case where I'm not going to interject my opinion. What happened is what happened. Debate at this point is not only pointless, it puts the focus on the wrong thing. I'm sure there will be fears and flashbacks this time around, this time, probably in Ohio instead of Florida, but I hope that we've learned a couple of things. Like the fact that even just a few votes are important.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that there are a couple of cool web sites that the politically minded might get a kick out of.

The first one is <http://www.fundrace.org>

This site allows you to check up on your neighbors or your brother-in-law and see if they've donated money to either major candidate. It also provides money maps and such.

The other site is <http://www.spinsanity.com>

It's a supposedly non-partisan look at what each "side" is spinning and what the fact of the matter is. Remember: There's no such thing as TOO MUCH information.

Well, that's it for me for this week. I'm going to go massage my neck and hope it feels better tomorrow. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Atari Announces Dragonshard!

Doom 3 'Terrifying'
Pure Pinball Ships!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Atari Announces Dragonshard - Dungeons & Dragons RTS Based on Wizards of the Coast's Newest Campaign Setting Eberron

Atari, under license from Hasbro, Inc., has announced plans to develop "Dragonshard" a real-time strategy game based on the Dungeons & Dragons universe created by Wizards of the Coast. "Dragonshard" will be the first game set in the exciting new D&D campaign setting, Eberron, a cinematic and war-torn world of action, adventure and intrigue where fantasy meets magical technology. Developed by Liquid Entertainment, "Dragonshard" will incorporate classic role-playing themes, a powerful and dynamic real-time strategy engine all woven together with a rich storyline involving a global conflict for an immensely powerful artifact with the power to change the fate of Eberron itself. "Dragonshard" is scheduled to be available for personal computer in Spring 2005.

"Ed Del Castillo and the team at Liquid Entertainment have a long history with the real-time strategy genre stretching all the way back to the original 'Command & Conquer.' When Atari needed a strong development studio that could bring together the depth of a Dungeons & Dragons world with the intensity of a real-time strategy game - they were the natural first choice," said John Hight, executive producer, Atari. "'Dragonshard' will take real-time strategy in new directions by using many of the unique aspects of the coolest features from traditional role-playing; we are also taking advantage of new surface level terrain rendering technology to give the player two distinct levels of play; new squad and leader tactical functionality to give the player an all new army experience; a new base development system; and much more."

Eberron, which has been recently released by Wizards of the Coast, details a land composed of a dark underworld ruled by monsters and demons, and a surface world home to the civilizations of humans, dwarves, halflings, gnomes and more. Surrounding the world is the Ring of Siberys, a multi-colored belt of crystal shards and a source of tremendous magical power. These "dragonshards" occasionally fall to earth and are the cornerstone of all magic on Eberron.

The "Dragonshard" takes place at time when the world of Eberron is in chaos. Three forces are vying for control of a massive dragonshard, known as the Heart of Siberys. The ancient artifact has come to rest in a mystical part of Eberron known as Xen'drik, once home to ancient and powerful civilizations; it is now a place of mystery and monsters. Shielded by a circle of high mountains and blanketed by never-ending tempests and blizzards, this region has been shunned for millennia.

Each of the three warring factions in "Dragonshard" has its own role to play in the overall story of the game. One force is looking to free the power within the ancient shard and use it to further its own self-righteous cause - it is The Order of the Silver Flame. A second faction has been expelled from its ancestral homes and has come seeking a dark tool for revenge - these are the Umbragen. The third force in "Dragonshard" remains veiled and mysterious, its intentions unknown.

The Order of the Silver Flame is an alliance of humans and dwarves from the land of Khorvaire. The Flametouched have gathered together warriors from a variety of cultures and traditions, all of whom are united in their desire to fight for the light. Guided by a seer's visions, the Flametouched have

assembled an army to destroy the Heart of Siberys; but the purpose behind this action is something that will only become clear as the campaign is unveiled.

The strength of the Silver Flame is in the versatility of its elite units. The Silver Flame provides players with a significant number of options, and each unit can adapt to fill many different situations. The forces of the Silver Flame are also familiar in form. Players can expect to control knights, wizards, priests and rogues among many others as they attempt to sway the tide of battle in their favor.

Order of the Silver Flame Units (sample):

- * Artificer - The foundation of the Order's workforce, gathering resources, repairing equipment and keeping things running smoothly. Given their knowledge of building construction, they function very well as siege engineers to attack enemy structures
- * Berserker - These stout and hardy Hammerfist dwarves honed their skills battling foul beasts in the caverns and wastelands they call home
- * Sentinel Marshal - Paragons of virtue who ride horseback into battle, inspiring allies and demoralizing foes, swinging their swords until victory is won

The Umbragen are the descendants of an ancient elvish race. When the age of giants came to an end, the Umbragen fled into the dark underworld. Forced to use dark powers to survive in this world of mind flayers, beholders and other terrible creatures, the Umbragen slowly became as evil and twisted as those they fought. Lead by the wizard Satros, the Umbragen have come to reclaim the might and power of their ancestors in an attempt to reshape the destiny of their race and the world.

All Umbragen units possess an innate ability to manipulate umbral energy. Those who serve in the military must master some aspect of the umbra. All Umbragen learn to merge with the shadows to avoid mortal injuries; this is reflected by allowing an Umbragen unit to use its mana in place of hit points once these are exhausted. An Umbragen with zero hit points becomes a shade; it is invisible in darkness and possesses other special or altered abilities.

Elite Umbragen units are drawn from the ranks of the undead - those who have given up their mortal lives in exchange for terrible mystic powers. In addition, the Umbragen army commands a considerable number of monstrous beings from their underworld home.

Umbragen Units (sample):

- * Shadowblade - Umbragen who have shown less of an affinity for magic and more for ambushing their enemies from the darkness
- * Darkslinger - These lithe and cunning assassins slink through the shadows waiting for the perfect moment to unleash bolts of dark energy upon their unsuspecting targets
- * Shade Witch - Brooding, female mages who spend the better part of their lives in deep study and meditation, using their abilities to aid allies and curse enemies

In addition to the three controllable factions, "Dragonshard" will also

feature two other significant forces that cannot be controlled by the player, but that will be encountered throughout the game. The first of these are the Illithids. These ancient enemies of the Umbragen have learned of the Heart and intend to claim its power for their own. Over the course of the story, the Illithids will prove a threat to all three sides. Finally, while the ancient elves themselves are long gone, their guardians and traps remain. All three warring factions will have to contend with these constructs and golems as they explore the ruins of the ancient elven city-state and the Ring of Storms.

"Dragonshard" is scheduled for release on personal computer in the spring of 2005.

'Doom 3' a Terrifying Experience

Think of "Doom 3" as an extended version of that moment in a haunted house when the monster jumps out from behind a corner. Like some sort of gag reflex, you can't help but instinctively scream in terror.

This new video game certainly has excellent graphics, but it's what you can't see that makes this sequel from id Software Corp. one of the scariest video games ever made.

Darkness hangs like a thick fog in this first-person shooter, shrouding your vision and adding a nearly unbearable sense of dread to a grim mission pitting you against a cast of hell's minions.

You're a nameless marine stationed on a Martian base owned by the Union Aerospace Corp. Somehow, hell's denizens have teleported onto the base and transformed just about everyone else into lumbering zombies. It's up to you to wipe them out before they spread evil to Earth.

What you see in this M-rated game is definitely NOT for children or the squeamish. The vivid three-dimensional graphics, a true step forward for computer games, allow for some extremely gross death scenes involving large quantities of blood and various human and monster guts.

You start out on the base, worming through one narrow, dim corridor after another. Just as it starts getting repetitious, you enter a portal to hell and fight the demons on their own turf.

"Doom 3" doles out monsters in small batches. While they aren't particularly intelligent, there's a steady supply of flying demon heads, oversized spiders, flame-throwing demons and other more sinister foes lunging, leaping and dive-bombing you from all directions.

I only wish there had been another tactic besides shooting first and thinking ... never. By the end, my fear had been a bit numbed by a familiar pattern: enter darkened room, wait for monsters to spawn all around you, kill them all, go to next chamber, repeat.

I enjoyed the game's rich, layered sound effects. The low-frequency hums and high-pitched whirs of giant high tech machinery, when mixed with the grunts and groans of nearby, unseen demons, really added a convincing sense of atmosphere.

The game has a few shortcomings compared to other recent titles in the

same genre. You can jump, run and crouch, but you can't lean around corners or crawl. And the only real innovative weapon in your arsenal is the "soul cube," an alien device which automatically devours the most powerful enemy on screen and transfers its life force to you.

One nice touch adds a great deal of tension: you have a flashlight that never runs out of power, but you can't use it at the same time as your weapons.

"Doom 3" is best enjoyed as a solitary experience, with the lights off and sound cranked.

The included multiplayer modes, meanwhile, were quite limited compared to the sprawling, team-focused online battles in games such as "Unreal Tournament: 2004."

The game supports just four players at a time per game (though some gamers have somehow managed to work around that limit and support a dozen or so people).

You can choose from only a few basic multiplayer modes, such as death match, team death match and last man standing, where you simply have to kill more opponents than anyone else in order to win.

On my broadband connection, games frequently suffered from an effect called lag, turning matches into slideshows that were hard to play.

Despite the technical sophistication, "Doom 3" generally performed well on my high-end home computer with a zippy AMD 64 bit processor and a gigabyte of memory.

The basic requirements are pretty steep: You'll need at least a 1.5 gigahertz computer with 384 megabytes of memory, 2.2 gigabytes of free hard drive space and a 3D video card with 64 megabytes. And the \$55 price is higher than most games.

"Doom 3" doesn't revolutionize computer games as we know them. Rather, it polishes the horror-themed first-person shooter genre to a high gloss.

It's not going to provoke any deep thoughts or philosophical debate, but anyone looking for a good scare will enjoy this gorgeous nail-biter.

Three stars out of four.

Pure Pinball Ships For Xbox

Iridon Interactive and XS Games LLC are pleased to announce that Pure Pinball for the Xbox videogame system from Microsoft has shipped to stores in North America. Pure Pinball, the only pinball game on the market for Xbox, will be on store shelves as of August 9th.

"Pure Pinball is the only game of its kind for the current generation of console systems," says Iridon CEO Bjorn Larsson. "In terms of quality, this is the closest you can get to pinball without owning an actual pinball machine."

"We look forward to seeing how gamers react once they get their hands on

this game," says Steve Grossman, CEO of XS Games. "Pure Pinball will undoubtedly appeal to gamers of all ages due to its classic pinball stylings brought together with the latest in 3D technologies."

The official Pure Pinball website launches today at <http://www.purepinball.com> and includes a brand new in-game trailer with never-before seen footage from the HyperSpace table. Come check out the photo-realistic 3D graphics and gameplay that sets Pure Pinball apart!

Players of Pure Pinball are not alone - they can also share their high scores on Xbox Live with gamers from around the world.

ShellShock: Nam '67 To Hit Retail on September 3rd For Xbox, Playstation 2, And PC

Eidos, one of the world's leading publishers and developers of entertainment software, announces that the highly anticipated ShellShock: Nam '67 will be released in Europe on 3rd September and North America on 14th September. ShellShock: Nam '67 is an action game based on the Vietnam War. Developed by Guerrilla, it will be available on PlayStation 2, Xbox and PC.

ShellShock: Nam '67 depicts the reality of the Vietnam War for the first time in a video game. You take on the role of a rookie soldier on his first tour of duty as he experiences the fear and chaos of the most controversial war of modern times. From napalm bombardments and Viet Cong booby traps, to the permanent threat of invisible foes and deadly ambushes, ShellShock: Nam '67 delivers a realistic portrayal of the terror of combat.

Jonathan Kemp, European managing director of Eidos says:

"ShellShock: Nam '67 is an important release for Eidos, especially as it is the first game of what will hopefully prove to be a very successful franchise. We are giving the game significant marketing support across all media, and in conjunction with the very positive press coverage already received, we are confident that ShellShock: Nam '67 will perform strongly at retail."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Bagle Variant Exacts a 'Price' with Infected Zip Files

Another variant of the ubiquitous Bagle worm is now making its way across the Internet, flooding in-boxes with infected Zip files. The newest member of the Bagle family, named Bagle.AQ, arrives via an e-mail message with a spoofed sending address and no subject line. The only text in the message

body is typically one or two words, either "price" or "new price."

The name of the infected Zip file that accompanies the message is some variation on that theme as well. The files often are named Price.zip or New_price.zip, and may have a number appended to the end of the file name.

Bagle.AQ first appeared Monday and began circulating in earnest in the early afternoon Eastern time. Some users reported getting as many as 100 infected messages in an hour. Virus researchers said they first began seeing Bagle.AQ at about 8 a.m. Monday and have been seeing thousands of copies an hour.

If a user opens the Zip file with an application such as Windows Internet Explorer that is not a standalone Zip file handler, the user will see an HTML file that contains exploit code. The file will then execute an included .exe file, which is a Trojan, according to McAfee Inc.'s analysis. The Trojan then connects to a number of remote sites to download the actual viral code.

The worm also is capable of bypassing some file filters and outbound firewall protections, said Sam Curry, vice president of the eTrust security division at Computer Associates International Inc. in Islandia, N.Y. Because it can inject itself into the Explorer process space, the worm's outgoing traffic will appear legitimate to most firewalls.

One sign of infection is that both TCP and UDP ports 2480 will be open on compromised machines.

Curry said CA has rated Bagle.AQ as a medium risk at this point, but will almost certainly up it to a high risk by the end of the day.

Teen Pleads Guilty in Web Worm Attack

A Minnesota high school senior pleaded guilty Wednesday in federal court to unleashing a variant of the "Blaster" Internet worm, which crippled more than a million computers last summer.

Jeffrey Lee Parson, 19, of Hopkins, Minn., is likely to face 18 months to three years behind bars after pleading guilty to one count of intentionally causing or attempting to cause damage to a protected computer. He also could be ordered to pay millions of dollars in restitution, Assistant U.S. Attorney Annette Hayes said.

Parson had pleaded not guilty after his arrest last August, but told U.S. District Judge Marsha Pechman on Wednesday, "I downloaded the original Blaster worm, modified it and sent it back out on the Internet."

Different versions of the Blaster worm, also known as the LovSan virus, crippled computer networks worldwide last summer. Parson's variant launched a distributed denial-of-service attack against a Microsoft Corp. Windows update Web site as well as personal computers. The government estimates Parson's version alone inundated more than 48,000 computers.

Parson was charged here last August because Microsoft is based in suburban Redmond.

"We appreciate the fact that the defendant has accepted responsibility for

the crime he committed," Microsoft deputy general counsel Nancy Anderson said Wednesday.

Parson is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 2 before Pechman, and prosecutors have recommended 18 to 37 months behind bars. Parson had faced a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Last fall, authorities said Parson admitted during an interview with FBI and Secret Service agents that he modified the original "Blaster" worm that made computers attack the Microsoft Web site in the summer of 2003.

They also have said Parson admitted that he previously launched attacks against other organizations, including the Motion Picture Association of America and the Recording Industry Association of America.

One of Parson's lawyers, Carol Koller, said Parson was young when he committed the attacks and that being arrested made him realize the seriousness of his crime.

"He has been exemplary," she said. "He has not touched a computer since the day of his arrest."

Parson has been out of jail on a \$25,000 pretrial bond with electronic home monitoring. On Wednesday, Pechman - citing his good behavior since the arrest - ordered him taken off electronic home monitoring pending sentencing.

Still, Parson cannot leave his home except to go to work, or if supervised and preapproved by the court. The judge declined Koller's request to grant him greater freedoms, such as being able to go to the movies without his parents.

"Mr. Parson is not a normal teenager," Pechman said. "Mr. Parson isn't going to be like other teenagers, who can take the family car, go to parties, go to the beach. That's not the way it's going to be."

Microsoft Gathers Support for Sender ID

Microsoft is hosting an industry summit on August 12th to fight spam and phishing attacks. The software giant is promoting its Sender ID technology as an answer to the phishing problem: 95 percent of all such attacks come from e-mail in which the "from" address has been spoofed.

The Sender ID Framework summit in Redmond, Washington, brings together 80 members of the E-mail Service Provider Coalition. The ESPC represents legitimate e-mail marketers who work for every major corporation in the U.S., including Microsoft, Amazon and eBay - all of which use e-mail to carry out transactions with their customers and exchange correspondence about customer accounts.

The ESPC also represents banks that send statements and offers.

The coalition's members provide delivery services to about 250,000 legitimate senders in North America, according to Microsoft.

"We have data from the IronPort sender base system which suggests that our members account for 25 percent of the legitimate e-mail in the U.S. today,"

says Trevor Hughes, executive director of the ESPC.

The group sees authenticated e-mail as the solution to the problems of spam, domain spoofing and phishing.

Cloudmark, DoubleClick, IronPort, Sendmail, Symantec, Tumbleweed and VeriSign are among the companies announcing plans for products that support the Sender ID framework.

"These companies are the early adopters, and they are taking a leadership position and making a commitment toward combating spam, spoofing and phishing. It is a significant step in the industry's efforts to combat spam," says Craig Spiezle, director of industry and partner relations for Microsoft's Safety Technology and Strategy Team.

To ensure that e-mail originates from the Internet domain it claims to come from, Sender ID validates the Internet protocol address of the sender's server.

The technology combines Microsoft's Caller ID for E-Mail technology with the Sender Policy Framework (SPF) authored by Meng Weng Wong, chief technology officer of Pobox.com.

The Sender ID specification is still under review by the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) for consideration as an industry-wide standard for e-mail authentication, Spiezle says.

"Between now and the start of 2005, you can expect to see companies adopting the Sender ID framework to achieve a higher level of reliability and deliverability of their valid e-mails," Spiezle predicts. "Sender ID does not explicitly prevent spam or phishing scams from being sent, but it does make them much easier to detect, because it provides a more reliable answer to the question, 'Who sent the message?'"

"It is a very positive step that Microsoft has got involved in e-mail ID, because until now, it hasn't come up with anything to stop phishing," Gartner analyst Avivah Litan told NewsFactor. "Microsoft is in a unique position to implement a solution to this problem."

"Today's announcement is a step in the right direction," Litan said, "but technology can't get that far without business processes. The first step is to establish technology standards; then there is a need to set up a third-party trusted service that can confirm the identity of the e-mail sender. No one is talking about that yet - so let's see how far this new initiative gets."

International Group Teams Against Spam

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is taking the fight against unsolicited commercial e-mail to Asia in September, where it will meet to discuss priorities for its new task force on spam.

The task force will encourage best practices in industry, promote technical measures to combat spam, and facilitate cross-border law enforcement, according to OECD representatives. The task force is also charged with coordinating international policy, bringing together the many different national bodies that have competencies in this field.

The task force will take two years to study and develop a tool kit of strategies to combat spam, including authentication and network management technologies as well as public awareness campaigns. The group will consider how to manage spam sent via mobile phones or instant messaging networks.

South Korea's Ministry of Information and Communication will host the workshop when the task force will set its priorities, September 8 and 9 in Busan, South Korea. OECD member states last discussed coordinating their antispam activities in February, at a meeting in Brussels hosted by the European Commission.

A recent survey by CipherTrust finds that almost 29 percent of the IP addresses sending spam to a sample of 1000 U.S. businesses in May, June, and July were in South Korea - although these addresses accounted for only 3 percent of the total volume of spam messages. Around 86 percent of the spam messages identified in the survey originated from IP addresses in the U.S.

Spam: Made In The U.S.A.

Proof that the United States is capitalism's capital, a survey released Thursday said that nearly all the world's spam is spewed by a limited number of hard-core spammers within the U.S.

Based on analysis of the spam it blocked for its 1,000-some clients during May, June, and July, message filtering firm CipherTrust said that a whopping 86 percent of all spam originated in the U.S.

Although U.S.-based IP addresses accounted for only 28 percent of the total addresses used to spam - tying South Korea for the top spot - spammers overwhelmingly favor U.S. domains. Messages from Korean IP addresses, in comparison, accounted for a paltry 3 percent of all spam mail. Similarly, China and Hong Kong, where about 23 percent of all spamming IP addresses reside, account for just 2.6 percent of all spam messages.

"That was quite a surprise," said Dmitri Alperovitch, a research engineer with CipherTrust. "The percentage of spamming IP addresses within the U.S. is in line with other surveys, but in the actual number of messages, the U.S. is responsible for the vast bulk of spam."

CipherTrust's numbers run counter to those in other surveys, which claim that a much larger percentage of spam comes from outside U.S. borders. Commtouch, for example, recently estimated that the U.S. accounted for only 56 percent of the world's spam.

Alperovitch defended his company's data by pointing out that other studies rely on spam-gathering honey pots, while CipherTrust tallies only those actual messages it intercepts. "Those two approaches are quite different," he claimed, "because some spammers are actually targeting specific companies with messages that the honey pots wouldn't see."

CipherTrust's numbers also bolstered the long-held theory that a few kingpin spammers are responsible for most of the spam. "The bulk of U.S. spam is coming from a very limited set of IPs with high-bandwidth connections," said Alperovitch, who estimated that the high-volume spamming addresses number fewer than 10,000 and the number of spammers at under 200.

The U.S. is the origin of choice for spammers, said Alperovitch, because of the plentiful supply of cheap high-speed bandwidth here. "Spammers need big pipes, and they don't want to pay much for it," he said.

That explains the low percentage of spam messages originating from overseas' IP addresses. The lack of cheap bandwidth outside the U.S. is stymieing spammers' attempts to scale up the volume of their mailings to U.S. sizes.

In fact, the majority of spam that does come from countries other than the U.S. originates with zombies, hijacked computers typically with high-speed, high-volume access to the Web, giving spammers a free ride, bandwidth-wise.

Zombies are less of a problem in the U.S., said Alperovitch, because of the inexpensive access spammers can buy here, as well as some recent efforts by major Internet providers to clamp down on zombies.

Cable provider Comcast, for instance, launched an effort in May to block its members' cable-connected machines from being used by spammers, and claimed a one-third reduction in spam coming out of its network. "We also saw a significant drop-off in spam from Comcast after May," said Alperovitch, who added that the decrease was in the 30 percent range.

Although the U.S. had anti-spam laws in place at both the states and federal levels - the latter through the CAN-SPAM Act which went into effect this January - critics have said that fighting spam locally doesn't do any good when the problem's global.

CipherTrust's numbers may mean it is possible to put at least a partial lid on spam through laws and enforcement solely within the U.S.

"Enforcement of CAN-SPAM could go a very long way toward reducing spam," said Alperovitch.

FTC Settles Case Involving Windows Pop-Up Ads

U.S. regulators said on Monday they had settled charges against a supplier of computer pop-up ads that had used a little-known Windows feature to bombard users with unwanted ads.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) said it had reached a settlement with San Diego-based D Squared Solutions that bars the company from sending pop-up ads via Windows Messenger Service.

Windows Messenger allows computer network administrators to communicate with others on their networks but is unnecessary for home users. It is unrelated to popular instant-messaging software such as AOL Instant Messenger.

The messenger service pop-up ads from San Diego-based D Squared were used to sell pop-up blocking software, and they could appear even when a user was online but not browsing the Web, according to the FTC.

The settlement contains no financial penalties against D Squared, and the company admitted no wrongdoing. Representatives of the company could not be reached for comment.

As part of the agreement, D Squared is also barred from selling messenger service pop-up blocking software or selling messenger service pop-up sending software and from sending instant messaging pop-up ads, the FTC said.

The FTC said the pop-up ads appeared as frequently as every 10 minutes in the forefront of screens, causing consumers to lose data and work productivity, applications to freeze and some computers to crash.

The FTC charged that the practices were unfair and violated the U.S. consumer protection law. In November, a federal judge temporarily halted D Squared's pop-up advertising at the request of the agency.

Apple Releases Mac OS X v10.3.5

Apple on Monday released Mac OS X v10.3.5, available for download through the Software Update system preference pane. The new version of Mac OS X "delivers enhanced functionality and improved reliability," according to Apple, which recommends it for all users.

Key changes in this release include improved support for NTFS formatted volumes, improves reliability for user logins and mounting of home directories in a networked environment, updated ATI and NVIDIA graphics drivers, improved Bluetooth compatibility for Apple Wireless Keyboard and Mouse and Bluetooth phones, additional FireWire and USB device compatibility, improved font management, updated Mail and Image Capture applications, improved compatibility for third party applications and previously posted standalone security updates, according to Apple.

Apple also references a knowledge base entry which purportedly contains information about the update, but that link was not working as MacCentral posted this article.

Roxio To Become Napster

Roxio said Monday that it is selling its software division to Sonic Solutions for \$80 million in cash and stock so it can focus exclusively on its Napster online music business.

The Santa Clara company will turn over its home media software, including Easy Media Creator and Toast, to Novato-based Sonic Solutions for \$70 million in cash and Sonic stock valued at \$10 million. Roxio will change its name to Napster once the deal closes.

Roxio Chairman and Chief Executive Chris Gorog said the transaction would give the company more than \$100 million in cash to fuel Napster's growth as it expands the music service to more college campuses this fall and enters other markets.

"We are on the path to becoming a very well-funded pure play in one of the hottest sectors in the consumer technology market," Gorog said during a conference call with analysts and reporters.

The deal comes as Napster faces an increasingly competitive online music market currently dominated by Apple Computer's iTunes service. Consumer electronics giant Sony recently unveiled an online music store, and Microsoft is expected to launch a download service this fall.

Roxio announced the sale along with the company's quarterly endings for the period ending June 30. The Santa Clara company ended its fiscal first quarter with a loss of \$2.6 million, compared with losses of \$370,000 the previous year.

Roxio reported first-quarter revenue of \$29.9 million, up nearly 24 percent from a year ago. Consumer software division sales declined from a year ago, but its Napster online music business grew to \$7.9 million, compared with \$781,000 a year ago.

Analysts who participated in Roxio's conference call focused on what appeared to be the slowing growth of the Napster music service during the quarter.

SunTrust Robinson Humphrey analyst Chris Rowen noted that if he subtracted the estimated \$1.5 million Napster received from one-time hardware promotions, Napster's subscription revenue is up less than \$1 million.

"Napster has shown very strong growth," said Rowen, who on June 24 upgraded his stock recommendation to a "buy."

"But look on a pure revenue basis . . . it doesn't look like exponential growth. It looks like it peaked some and is slowing down," he added.

Napster said its campus music service, piloted last year at Penn State University, will expand to six colleges this fall.

Much of Napster's growth projections hinge on a new generation of music players, powered by Microsoft's forthcoming Janus technology. Janus will allow consumers to pay a flat monthly subscription fee - Napster says about \$20 or less - for the ability to transfer an unlimited number of songs to a portable player.

"We at Napster have little question that the Windows Media Audio format will be pervasive during the mass adoption phase of digital music over the next few years," Gorog said.

Apple Launches Graphics Software, Video Bundle

Apple Computer Inc. on Tuesday began shipping a new program designed to let users create real-time motion graphics and unveiled a discount video-editing software bundle featuring its flagship Final Cut Pro software.

Motion, first introduced earlier this year at a broadcasting convention, costs \$299. The Production Suite, which includes Final Cut Pro HD, Motion and DVD Studio Pro 3, sells for \$1,299.

Speaking at the SIGGRAPH computer graphics show here, Apple executives said the production bundle, with an effective \$500 discount, is designed to get people already paying \$999 for Final Cut to upgrade to a more comprehensive package.

While SIGGRAPH has traditionally been the domain of high-end professional graphics companies and researchers who think years ahead of the market, graphics production technology has steadily gone more mass-market.

Group to Propose New High-Speed Wireless Format

A group of technology companies including Texas Instruments Inc., STMicroelectronics and Broadcom Corp., on Thursday said they will propose a new wireless networking standard up to 10 times the speed of the current generation.

The group says they are submitting a plan for a new standard for a popular short range wireless networking technology known as Wi-Fi - which is used in airports, hotels and coffee shops to access the Web without wires.

The group, calling itself "WWiSE," said their version of an 802.11n standard would be compatible with the technology currently in use, known by various code names such as 802.11b and 802.11g. Their technology could operate at speeds up to 540 megabits per second.

The group said they planned to submit their proposal to the task force at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers charged with developing an 802.11n standard.

The group's proposed version of the standard would peak at a speed of 540 Mbps, requiring using a larger communications channel for the signal than most jurisdictions allow. Using the more standard channel size, their 802.11n proposal would peak at 135 Mbps.

They also said they would license their patents necessary to implement their version of 802.11n on a royalty-free basis.

Other companies taking part in the WWiSE group are Airgo Networks, Bermai, and Conexant Systems Inc.

Stamps.com Offers Personal Photos on U.S. Postage

Bad sunsets, cutesy baby pictures, and dogs, lots of dogs, will feature in a new line of U.S. stamps introduced this week by Web-based Stamps.com, which turns digital photos into valid postage.

Stamps.com Inc. said it had won approval from the U.S. Postal Service for a trial run of personalized postage that allows consumers to slap their favorite photos on officially recognized stamps for postcards, letters and packages.

The market test comes 164 years after Britain's Queen Victoria's image appeared on the Penny Black in 1840, the first modern stamp.

Ken McBride, chief executive of the Los Angeles-based supplier of printed postage for small businesses, said on Wednesday he expected the company's new PhotoStamps service to be formally approved by the Postal Service within two months.

Each stamp carries Stamps.com's patented two-dimensional barcode technology made up of tiny dots arranged in patterns with billions of variations to prevent counterfeiters.

Consumers looking to create their own stamps can visit <http://photo.stamps.com/>. A three-stage process is involved in transmitting a digital picture to the site, using the site's tools to crop the photo and choose a color scheme, and then placing the order. Delivery takes four to seven business days.

A package of twenty stamps for use on a standard 1-ounce envelope runs \$16.99. The price includes \$7.40 for the twenty 37-cent stamps, \$2.99 for shipping, and the costs of photographic-quality printing.

McBride said roughly 2,000 orders for stamps featuring kids, weddings, dog and cats and travel shots had poured in during the two days the service has been available.

Photos with nudity, profanity, celebrities or politicians will not be accepted, he said.

"We are asking people to stick with the family-oriented intention of the product," McBride said. "We are staying out of the realm of the controversial, which includes political candidates," he said.

Consumers submitting photos must sign a legal consent form declaring that they have permission to use any photo used on a stamp. Celebrity fan photos will be rejected. Every photo is checked by human editors before it is printed into stamps.

Stamps vary from postcard to package size. Twenty postcard stamps with a 23-cent face value sell for \$13.99 while \$3.85 stamps for 1-lb. priority mail cost \$89.99. The overhead runs around \$7 to \$8 for each 20-stamp sheet, McBride said.

Stamps.com is building on an existing relationship with the U.S. Postal Service, under which it supplies 320,000 mostly small business subscribers with printed postage for about \$16 a month. To date, the company's stamp-printing technology has been used to deliver 250 million pieces of mail, McBride said.

PhotoStamps addresses the vast new market of consumer-to-consumer mailing, which McBride estimated amounted to 7 billion pieces of mail a year in the United States alone. He said small businesses and direct mailers would also be invited to take advantage of its customized postage offer.

Custom postage has been offered on a limited basis in other countries, McBride said. Postal authorities in Canada, Britain and Australia have allowed citizens to mail in photos for use on custom postage stamps, a process that takes several weeks.

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